

# Raga language

**Raga** (also known as **Hano**) is the language of northern Pentecost island in Vanuatu. Raga belongs to the East Vanuatu languages, a branch of the Austronesian languages family. In old sources the language is sometimes referred to by the names of villages in which it is spoken, such as Bwatvenua (Qatvenua), Lamalanga, Vunmarama and Loltong.

With an estimated 6,500 native speakers (in the year 2000), Raga is the second most widely spoken of Pentecost's five native languages (after Apma), and the seventh largest vernacular in Vanuatu as a whole. There are significant communities of Raga speakers on Maewo island and in Port Vila and Luganville as a result of emigration from Pentecost.

The Raga spoken by most people today is heavily mixed with Bislama, Vanuatu's national language. The Turaga indigenous movement, based at Lavatmanggemu in north-eastern Pentecost, have attempted to purge the language of foreign influences by coining or rediscovering native words for introduced concepts such as "torch battery" (*vat bongbongi*, literally "night stones") and "hour" (*ngguha*, literally "movement"). Members of the Turaga movement write in Raga language using Avoiuli, a unique writing system inspired by local sand drawings.

Raga is generally considered an easy language to speak and learn, and is known as a second language by a number of speakers of other Vanuatu languages.

Modern Raga is relatively homogeneous, with no significant dialectal variation. A distinctive southern dialect of Raga, **Nggasai**, is now extinct; its last native speaker died in 1999.

Several grammatical sketches, vocabulary lists and short papers on Raga have been published, beginning with the work of R H Codrington and von der Gabelentz in the late 19th century, and a number of religious texts have been translated into the language. However, no thorough description of Raga has ever been published.

<b>Raga</b>	
	Hano
<b>Native to</b>	Vanuatu
<b>Region</b>	Pentecost Island
<b>Native speakers</b>	6,500 (2001) <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Language family</b>	Austronesian <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Malayo-Polynesian</li> <li>▪ Oceanic</li> <li>▪ Southern Oceanic</li> <li>▪ Vanuatu</li> <li>▪ Northern Vanuatu</li> <li>▪ East Vanuatu</li> <li>▪ <b>Raga</b></li> </ul>
<b>Writing system</b>	Avoiuli Latin alphabet
<b>Language codes</b>	
<b>ISO 639-3</b>	lml
<b>Glottolog</b>	hano1246 ( <a href="http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/hano1246">http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/hano1246</a> ) <sup>[2]</sup>

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## Phonology

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The consonants of Raga are as follows,

Raga consonants

	Labial	Labialized labial	Alveolar	Velar	Glottal
<b>Nasal</b>	m	m <sup>w</sup>	n	ŋ (ñ)	
<b>Voiced plosive</b>	b~p (b)	b <sup>w</sup>	d	ŋg (ḡ)	
<b>Voiceless plosive</b>			t	k	
<b>(Voiced) fricative</b>	v~f (v)	v <sup>w</sup> ~ f <sup>w</sup>		ɣ~x (g)	
<b>Voiceless fricative</b>			s		h
<b>Sonorant</b>		w	l, r		

In this article, the sounds /ŋ/ and /ŋg/ (like the *ng* of 'singer' and 'finger', respectively), which are written *ñ* and *ḡ* in standard orthography, will be written *ng* and *ngg*. *G* is typically pronounced like the *ch* in Scottish "loch".

Prenasalization of the voiced plosives, such that *b* becomes *mb* (always voiced) and *d* becomes *nd*, occurs when the preceding consonant is nasal (*m*, *n* or *ng*). Thus *mabu* "rest" is pronounced *mambu*.

*V*, *vw* are labiodental, unlike in Apma to the immediate south, where they are bilabial [β, β<sup>w</sup>]. Descriptions describe *v* as [v] and *g* as [x] more commonly than as [f] or [ɣ], but there is evidently some variation.

Raga has the five basic vowels **a**, **e**, **i**, **o** and **u**. Vowels are not generally distinguished for length.

Word roots in Raga nearly always end with a vowel. However, word-final vowels are often dropped within phrases, so that, for example, *tanga* "basket" and *maita* "white" combine to make *tang maita* "white basket".

Stress occurs on the penultimate syllable of a word.

## Grammar

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Basic word order in Raga is subject–verb–object.

### Pronouns

Personal pronouns are distinguished by person and number. They are not distinguished by gender. The basic pronouns are as follows:

Person	Raga	English
1st person singular	<i>inau</i>	"me"
2nd person singular	<i>ginggo</i>	"you" (singular)
3rd person singular	<i>kea</i>	"him / her / it"
1st person dual (inclusive)	<i>gidaru</i>	"us" (you and me, two of us)
1st person dual (exclusive)	<i>kamaru</i>	"us" (me and another)
2nd person dual	<i>kimiru</i>	"you (two)"
1st person plural (inclusive)	<i>gida</i>	"us" (you and me)
1st person plural (exclusive)	<i>kamai</i>	"us" (me and others)
2nd person plural	<i>kimiu</i>	"you" (plural)
3rd person dual/plural	<i>kera</i>	"them"

## Nouns

Plurality is indicated by placing *ira* before a noun:

*manu* = [the] bird  
*ira manu* = [the] birds

Nouns may be suffixed to indicate whom an item belongs to. For example:

*iha* = name  
*ihaku* = my name  
*ihamwa* = your name  
*ihana* = his/her name  
*ihan ratahigi* = the chief's name

Possession may also be indicated by the use of **possessive classifiers**, separate words that occur before the noun and take possessive suffixes. These classifiers are:

- *no-* for general possessions (*nonggu tanga*, "my basket")
- *bila-* for things that are cared for, such as crops and livestock (*bilada boe*, "our pig")
- *ga-* for things to be eaten (*gam bweta*, "your taro")
- *ma-* for things to be drunk (*mara wai*, "their water")

Historically there was also a classifier *wa-* for sugarcane to be chewed (*wan toi*, "his sugarcane"); this has fallen out of use among younger speakers.

The possessive suffixes are as follows:

Person	Raga	English
1st person singular	-ku or -nggu	"of mine"
2nd person singular	-mwa	"of yours" (singular)
3rd person singular	-na	"of his/hers/its"
1st person dual (inclusive)	-daru	"of ours" (yours and mine, two of us)
1st person dual (exclusive)	-maru	"of ours" (mine and another's)
2nd person dual	-miru	"of yours" (two of you)
1st person plural (inclusive)	-da	"of ours" (yours and mine)
1st person plural (exclusive)	-mai	"of ours" (mine and others')
2nd person plural	-miu	"of yours" (plural)
3rd person dual/plural	-ra	"of theirs"
Generic	-i	-

A verb may be transformed into a noun by the addition of a **nominalising suffix -ana**:

*bwalo* = to fight (verb)

*bwaloana* = a fight (noun)

Modifiers generally come after a noun:

*vanua* = island

*vanua kolo* = small island

*vanua gairua* = two islands

## Verbs

Verbs in Raga are usually preceded by a subject pronoun and by a marker indicating the tense, aspect and mood of the action.

The subject pronouns are as follows:

Person	Raga	English
1st person singular	<i>na-</i>	"I"
2nd person singular	<i>go-</i>	"you" (singular)
1st person plural (inclusive)	<i>ta-</i>	"we" (you and I)
1st person plural (exclusive)	<i>ga-</i>	"we" (others and I)
2nd person plural	<i>gi-</i>	"you" (plural)
3rd person plural	<i>ra-</i>	"they"

There is no 3rd person singular subject pronoun ("he/she/it").

Raga has five sets of tense/aspect/mood markers:

Tense / Aspect / Mood	Used for	Marker (full form)	Marker (short form)
<b>Imperfective</b>	Actions in the present tense Temporary or changing states	<i>mwa</i>	- <i>m</i>
<b>Perfective</b>	Actions in the past tense Fixed states	<i>nu</i>	- <i>n</i>
<b>Potential</b>	Things that may happen in the future	<i>vi</i>	- <i>v</i> or - <i>i</i>
<b>Prospective</b>	Things that are about to happen	<i>men</i>	- <i>men</i>
<b>Hypothetical</b>	Things that have not happened and probably won't	<i>si</i>	- <i>s</i>

The full forms of these markers are used in the 3rd person singular, when there is usually no subject pronoun:

***mwa lolia*** = he does it  
***nu lolia*** = he did it  
***vi lolia*** = he will do it

Elsewhere, short forms of these markers are suffixed to the subject pronoun:

***nam lolia*** = I do it  
***nan lolia*** = I did it  
***nav lolia*** = I will do it

There are also **dual** (two-person) forms incorporating a particle *ru* "two":

***ram lolia*** = they do it  
***ramuru lolia*** = the two of them do it

Historically there were **trial** (three-person) forms incorporating a particle *dol* or *tol*, but these have fallen out of use.

There is a pattern of verb-consonant mutation whereby *v* at the start of a verb changes to *b*, *vw* to *bw*, *g* to *ngg*, and *t* to *d*. This mutation occurs in imperfective aspect, and in the presence of the additive marker *mom*:

***nan vano*** = I went  
***nam bano*** = I am going

Negative sentences are indicated with the two-part marker *hav...te(he)* "not", which encloses the verb and anything suffixed to it:

***nan hav lolia tehe*** = I didn't do it

The passive voice can be formed by attaching the suffix *-ana* to the verb:

***nu lolia*** = he did it  
***nu loliana*** = it was done

The direct object immediately follows the verb. Some object pronouns take the form of suffixes attached to the verb:

Person	Raga	English
1st person singular	-(a)u	"me"
2nd person singular	-go	"you" (singular)
3rd person singular (or inanimate plural)	-a or -e	"him" / "her" / "it" (or "them")
3rd person plural (animate)	-ra	"them"

In some cases a particle *-ni-* interposes between the verb and the object pronoun:

*nam doronia* = I like it

## Sample phrases

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English	Raga
Where are you going?	<i>Gomen van (hala) behe?</i>
Where have you come from?	<i>Gon mai (hala) behe?</i>
Where is it?	<i>Mwa <sup>n</sup>do (hala) behe?</i>
It's here	<i>Mwa <sup>n</sup>do teti</i>
Come here!	<i>Mai teti!</i>
Go away!	<i>Van dagai!</i>
What's your name?	<i>Ihamwa be ihei?</i>
My name is...	<i>Ihaku be...</i>
Where are you from?	<i>Gingga ata behe? / Ginggo nin behe?</i>
I am from...	<i>Inau ata... / Inau nin...</i>
How much? / How many?	<i>Gaiviha?</i>
one	<i>tea / gaituvwa</i>
two	<i>(gai)rua</i>
three	<i>(gai)tolu</i>
four	<i>(gai)vasi</i>
five	<i>(gai)lima</i>
six	<i>(gai)ono</i>
seven	<i>(gai)bitu</i>
eight	<i>(gai)vwelu</i>
nine	<i>(gai)sivo</i>
ten	<i>hangvulu</i>
Thank you	<i>Tabeana</i>
It's just fine	<i>Nu tavuha ngano</i>

## References

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1. Raga (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/lml>) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)

2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "[Hano](#)" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/hano1246>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.

## External links

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- [The Languages of Pentecost Island - information on Raga](http://www.pentecostisland.net/languages/raga) (<http://www.pentecostisland.net/languages/raga>)
  - [Leo huri ganisabuga](http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/Melanesia/raga_hc.htm) ([http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/Melanesia/raga\\_hc.htm](http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/Melanesia/raga_hc.htm))  
Anglican Holy Communion from the Book of Common Prayer in Raga, digitized by Richard Mammana and Charles Wohlers
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